

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Red Rock Canyon School
747 St. George Blvd
St. George, Utah 84770**

June 8, 2004



Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Red Rock Canyon School
747 St George Blvd
St. George, Utah 84770**

June 8, 2004

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

**Patti Harrington
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS**

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate in-service growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, June 8, 2004, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Red Rock Canyon School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal David Turner is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Red Rock Canyon School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Red Rock Canyon School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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**Board of Regents Appointments*

10/30/03

RED ROCK CANYON SCHOOL

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Frank E. Allen, Esq. J.D., MBA	Member
Jay Ence, President of Ence Homes.....	Member
Stephan Biddulph.....	Member
Frank Habibian.....	Member
Clark Wilkenson, CPA.....	Member

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Stephan Biddulph.....	Executive Director
David Turner	Superintendent
Robin Hamilton.....	Registrar
Paul Eves.....	Business Administrator
Fiona Spath	Human Resources
Brendan Dalley	Educational Consultant

RED ROCK CANYON SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

David Turner Principal
Joan Runs Through Assistant Principal

Counseling

Dennis Budd Drug and Alcohol Counselor
Leslie Budd Therapist
George Stoddard Therapist
Jon Larsen Therapist
Brent Esplin Therapist
Helen Johnson Therapist
Kwinten Kemp Therapist
Moniel Feuerman Therapist

Support Staff

Secretaries:

Robin Hamilton

Case Management:

Pamela Patrick
Bob Brunner
Tami Vernon

School Nurse:

Pam Tulley
Kenneth F. Bennet

Cafeteria Staff:

Shirley Jordan, Food Service/ Cook
Rafael B. Fonseca, Cook

Custodial Staff:

Craig Wordal, Grounds keeper
Harlan T. Jones, Janitor
Carol Pendleton, Housekeeping
Colette Slack, Housekeeping

Employment Center:

Fiona Spath

Faculty

Heath Apo Teacher Aide (Blue)
Rhonda Brunner Teacher (Social Science, Spec. Ed)
Shannon Chelsey Teacher Aide, (Beehive)
Takavar Ghane Teacher, Sky (English)
Rashanak Kahali Asl Teacher Aide (Coral)

Garhett Mecham.....	Teacher Aide (Blue)
Jeremy Morrison	Teacher Aide (Steel)
Geoffrey Myers	Music Instructor
Rebecca Rubio	Teacher Aide (Green)
Joan Runs Through	Teacher, Coral (English)
Shareen Strem	Teacher, Steel (Special Ed)
Denae Syphus.....	Violin Instructor
John D. Wadley.....	Teacher Aide, Brick
Lisa West	Teacher, Green (Social Studies)
Jaime Williams.....	Teacher, Blue (Social Studies)
Dan Woodside.....	Teacher, Brick (Math)

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Red Rock Canyon school is to promote a healthy, positive environment through which students can learn the greatness of caring and learn to uplift both their outlook and their life choices.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

Red Rock Canyon School's beliefs:

- Red Rock Canyon School and staff are to provide a caring community.
- Students become leaders by giving service to those in need.
- Students learn to live happier, more rewarding, productive lives by showing the greatness of caring.
- Learning is best when it is "hands-on" and "brain-friendly."
- Teachers and staff teach best through positive, appropriate relationships.
- Student directed learning leads to life-long learning.
- Red Rock Canyon School is mastery based in the belief that all students can learn.
- Competition is useful only as the motivation inside one's self to do one's best.

MEMBERS OF VISITING TEAM

Ralph P. Vander Heide, Ph.D., Consultant in School Accreditation, Utah State
Office of Education, Visiting Team Chairperson

Joette Hayden, Educational Director, Triumph Youth Services, Toquerville

Judith H. Vander Heide, Consultant in School Accreditation

RED ROCK CANYON SCHOOL
REPORT OF NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS AND
STATE OF UTAH ACCREDITATION RESPONSE TEAM

CHAPTER 1:

**INTRODUCTION DESCRIBING THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT, THE SELF-
IMPROVEMENT PLAN, CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL, AND
OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

A team of three educators, the Visiting Team, visited Red Rock Canyon School on June 8, 2004, to complete a site evaluation as part of the requirements for accreditation by the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS) and the State of Utah.

Red Rock Canyon School, a private residential special use facility, was organized in the State of Utah as a limited liability company on May 4, 1998. The time between May 4, 1998 and November 1, 1999 was spent developing the buildings and grounds of a former motel to be used to house the school, and in designing curricula and therapeutic procedures. In September of 1999, Red Rock Canyon School became accredited through the National Private Schools Educational Alliance.

The first students arrived on November 1, 1999, when the school consisted of only one unit of residential boys and one classroom. By January of 2000, a second residential unit for girls was created and a new classroom was opened. By March of 2000, the third unit/classroom was opened and the faculty consisted of three teachers and an academic director.

At this early stage the school followed the management style of Positive Discipline. Students participated in a behavior program that stressed levels, rewards and punishments, and rigid, staff-enforced structures. Students earned higher levels and privileges through positive behavior, and lost levels and privileges through negative behavior. Some success was seen under Positive Discipline.

By January of 2002, Red Rock Canyon School had a population of over 100 students spread over eight classrooms. The program came under a new directorship with a vision for improvement, and two major upgrades were initiated. The first change affected the behavioral management portion of the school. A push was made to move away from a level-based program to the "Positive Peer Culture" model of youth intervention. Under Positive Peer Culture, students are empowered to help themselves and others through gentle immersion into an environment of care, concern, service, and identifying helpful versus hurtful behaviors.

The second major change affected the academic portion of the program. The decision was made to move from National Private School accreditation to accreditation through the Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges and Universities (Northwest) now the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS). Where the move to Positive Peer Culture had greatly challenged the residential portion of the program to raise its standards of youth intervention, the move to seek Northwest accreditation likewise pushed the academic portion of the program to reach a higher level of service.

Candidacy status for accreditation through the Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges and Universities was granted in October 2002. Prior to candidacy, two political events had a great impact on the population of the school. The first was the events surrounding September 11, 2001. The destruction of the World Trade Center in New York disrupted business around the world. The worries about homeland security adversely affected the industry surrounding residential treatment centers, and enrollment dropped accordingly. The second political event to have an impact on Red Rock Canyon School was the decision by the State of South Dakota to disallow the placement of South Dakota students to programs in other states. Since many students were Native Americans from South Dakota, the enrollment of the school dropped to 80 students.

From October 2002 to the present, the school has maintained a population of approximately 80 students and has increased its commitment to both Positive Peer Culture and the Northwest Association.

The school has a principal and assistant principal, a drug and alcohol counselor, seven therapists, six full-time teachers, and several aides. Thirteen other persons are employed in support positions, which include two nurses, cafeteria and custodial staff, case management personnel, secretaries, and an employment center worker.

On June 7, the Visiting Team held a dinner meeting with the principal, assistant principal, and director of marketing. On June 8, the Visiting Team began the day with a meeting with the principal and the assistant principal. The team reviewed the self-study, with concentration on the school's action plan, and covered all aspects of the educational program at Red Rock Canyon School. The Visiting Team toured the facilities, visited classes, and spoke with school personnel and students. No parents were available for consultation; however, the Visiting Team perused surveys completed by parents and discussed the views of parents with both students and school personnel.

The school has established beliefs and a mission statement, which are specific to the needs and desired learning outcomes at Red Rock Canyon School. Three specific desired results for student learning (DRSLs) were decided upon by the entire faculty and the school's constituents. The school analyzed instructional and organizational effectiveness, and developed an action plan for achievement of the DRSLs. Plans, complete with indicators of achievement, are in place to implement the goals of the action plan and to document the results.

The school followed the guidelines of the National Study of School Evaluation guidebook, *School Improvement: Focusing on Student Performance* as well as the Utah

guide, *Collaborating for Student Achievement*. All school personnel participated in an in-service workshop on accreditation, which was held at the school in May 2003.

CHAPTER 2:

DESCRIPTION OF THE VISITING TEAM'S PERSPECTIVE AS TO THE WORK OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL IN ADDRESSING EACH ASPECT OF THE SELF-STUDY REPORT

The School Profile:

The profile of Red Rock Canyon School for the most part adequately portrays the school population, environment, curriculum, and other relevant information about the school, with emphasis on its mission, philosophy, and educational direction.

The school used survey instruments to gather data on the performance of the school in a systematic and well-managed way. The collection of data essentially provided a comprehensive description of the school and the “big picture” of its performance. Both limitations and strengths are indicated. The profile data is being used to guide the school improvement planning process.

The profile includes information mentioned in Chapter 1 above, as well as text and graphs on student demographics, school characteristics, student performance data, and stakeholder perspectives on the quality of education at Red Rock Canyon School. The Visiting Team recommends that future self-studies include more information on the faculty (education level, degrees, teaching experience, etc.).

Salient information from the profile includes the following:

- The current enrollment is 81 (56 percent are males).
- The student-teacher ratio is 13.5 to 1.
- Native American tribal placements comprise 24 percent of the students.
- Behaviors listed as contributing factors for placement at Red Rock Canyon include defiance, self-harm, substance abuse, and poor social skills.
- The average length of stay at the school is 7 months.
- Coursework is designed to allow working at one's own individual pace.
- The average amount of credit earned is five credits.

As noted, the information has been disaggregated and used in developing action plans. The Visiting Team notes that the school could make greater effort to complete follow-up studies to learn about the post-Red Rock Canyon School endeavors of students.

Beliefs and Mission Statements:

The beliefs and mission statement are relevant and meaningful. The Visiting Team observes that the school logo—with the rising sun and two hands in a cupping shape (or red rocks), along with the image of a male and female with their raised hands joined—conveys the beliefs and mission of the school (i.e., new beginnings and opportunities, the worth of each human soul, and the provision of positive growth).

Mission

The mission statement is concise and meaningful. Along with the beliefs, it gives a clear direction to the school. The Visiting Team observes that the mission statement could possibly be rewritten to include the concept of preparing students for lifelong learning, which, indeed, the school aims to accomplish.

Belief Statements

Red Rock Canyon School is a private, special use facility. Because the targeted clientele was predetermined, much of the design and many of the beliefs of Red Rock Canyon School were established in the program's infancy, before the enrollment of students.

The Red Rock Canyon School logo conveys the school's beliefs. The red rock, which can also be seen as two hands in cupping shape, represents the school's commitment to excellence in providing a positive growth community in which youths can make necessary changes in their lives. The image of a male and female with their hands joined and raised upward conveys the school's belief in the worth of each human soul, and the joy that comes from positive self-esteem and living in harmony with others. The image of the rising sun represents the school's belief in new beginnings, a belief that each new day comes with opportunity and purpose that can be realized by each youth.

Very little has changed over the years in this fundamental outlook. The school has gone through fluctuations in enrollment and ethnic diversity. The school has also moved away from the Positive Discipline model of behavior management to the Positive Peer Culture model. Throughout these changes, Red Rock Canyon School's beliefs remain:

- Red Rock Canyon School and staff are to provide a caring community.
- Students become leaders by giving service to those in need.
- Students learn to live happier, more rewarding, productive lives by showing the greatness of caring.
- Learning is best when it is "hands-on" and "brain-friendly."

- Teachers and staff teach best through positive, appropriate relationships.
- Student-directed learning leads to life-long learning.
- Red Rock Canyon School is mastery-based in the belief that all students can learn.

The school's eight beliefs were an outgrowth of the profiling. They are free of jargon and may be understood by the general public and all stakeholders. They express exactly what the school wants expressed. It appears that all stakeholders are willing to make a commitment to the direction indicated by these beliefs.

Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs):

As noted above, the following DRSLs are relevant to the goals of the educational program:

- Learning to Care
- Learning to Look for Solutions
- Learning to Communicate Appropriately

Each DRSL is listed in the action plan, complete with time lines, indication of needed resources, and persons responsible for overseeing attainment of the objectives. Procedures for evaluation and assessment are also indicated.

Analysis of the Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness:

A holistic approach was evident at the school that indicated integrated values and lifelong learning skills, cross-curricular instruction, and some variety in teaching methodologies. The Visiting Team recommends, however, that greater emphasis be given to direct instruction. There is a rather heavy reliance on "packet learning." Consideration should be given to pedagogical approaches such as "Thematic Learning" or other methodologies that allow for the teaching of different ability and age levels.

Use of the Internet as part of instruction is somewhat limited because of the concern that it will be misused. However, some students, under the guidance of teachers, are using it, and the school continues to work at improving this aspect of the educational program.

The Visiting Team observes that the Woodcock-Johnson tests are invalid for students who leave the program before the completion of one year. Therefore, since the average stay is seven months, the school needs to use other instruments for assessing academic growth.

Analysis of the Action Plan:

As already noted, the objectives of the school improvement plan(s) are well defined, and each has a functional time line that is practical and achievable. Generally, responsibilities have been assigned to the principal and/or the chair of the Development Committee to carry out the steps of the action plans. The school should consider assigning others as “responsible parties.”

CHAPTER 3:

THE SCHOOL’S ADHERENCE TO THE STANDARDS OF THE NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS, THE UTAH STATE CORE CURRICULUM, AND THE UTAH LIFE SKILLS

Red Rock Canyon School, with minor deviations, meets the eleven standards of the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS). The school meets the requirements of the State Core Curriculum, and the seven Utah Life Skills appear to be included in the general teaching of life skills.

The Visiting Team commends the school’s principal for having recently completed the requirements for a Utah license in school administration. The school is now in complete compliance with NAAS Standard VIII—Administration.

The school needs to continue to work on Standard IV—Library Media in order to improve the selection, relevance, and currency of all reading materials, and to improve the availability of technology.

CHAPTER 4:

MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The administration and faculty are to be commended for their grasp, knowledge, and implementation of the accreditation process, and for their cooperation with and hospitality toward the Visiting Team.
- The Visiting Team commends administration and faculty for writing a perceptive and concise self-study.

- All constituents are commended for their understanding of the self-improvement plan, and for their frankness in analyzing the educational program at Red Rock Canyon School.
- The Visiting Team commends the continued emphasis placed by all stakeholders on Positive Peer Culture.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration, therapists, and teachers for working together to integrate therapy and the psychological needs of students with the academic element.
- The school is commended for staying in close touch with parents/guardians.
- The Visiting Team commends the owners of the facility for providing adequate financial support and for responding positively to reasonable requests by staff members for educational materials that will improve teaching and learning.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the faculty and administration continue to seek ways to increase direct teaching.
- Because most of their students are at the school for a limited time, the Visiting Team recommends that Red Rock Canyon investigate and implement the use of a variety of testing measures rather than relying solely on one standard test, the Woodcock-Johnson, for evaluating student progress.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the administration and faculty review and evaluate the curriculum on a consistent basis.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the administration respond to teachers' requests for more in-service training in specific areas of perceived need.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school use the consulting librarian to ensure that the current library collection is culled of all non-relevant and outdated materials, and that new materials be chosen to support the school curriculum, goals, mission, and beliefs, and meet the academic and recreational reading needs of the students.
- It is also recommended that better use of electronic resources, including the Internet, be assured.